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ABSTRACT

The result of a summer reading group formed by members of the Newark (Ohio) Organization of Teachers of English to share book titles and ideas for use in the English classroom, this first annual compilation presents reviews of good reading materials for kindergarten through grade nine. Following an introduction and a list of contributors, the volume presents the reviews, divided into the following categories: (1) realistic fiction, (2) fantasy/folk tales, (3) historical fiction, (4) nonfiction, (5) poetry, and (6) picture books. Each of the guide's entries contains publication information, a summary, discussion questions/extension activities, related titles and themes, and the contributor's critical opinion. The guide concludes with author and subject indexes. (HTH)

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# CONNECTIONS:

# USING

# CONTEMPORARY CHILDREN'S LITERATURE (K-9)

# IN THE

# CLASSROOM

Edited by Carole Lovett Koontz

1985 Edition

A Special Issue of THE NOTEBOOK, publication of The Newark Organization of Teachers of English

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Carole Lovett Koontz, Editor
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## Introduction

In the spring of 1984, a handful of language arts teachers from the Newark area relaxed around a conference table at the Licking County Board of Education. They had just concluded an executive session of the Newark Organization of Teachers of English (N.O.T.E.), a ten-year-old affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE).

Casual conversation turned to the topic of summer reading, specifically, the fact that even though there seemed to be time enough to read for pleasure some of the recently published children's literature, it was an impossible task to read and evaluate some 3,000 titles per year, let alone draft plans for their use in the classroom.

Judith Keck, then president-elect of the Ohio Council of Teachers of English Language Arts (OCTELA) and a curriculum consultant/supervisor for the Licking County Schools, offered a solution. She proposed forming a N.O.T.E. special-interest organization, a summer reading group that could meet periodically to share titles they had read and ideas for their use in the classroom.

Nearly everyone present at that meeting expressed interest and gathered at a local restaurant several weeks later for their first meeting. Primed for a bite to eat (and admitting that food was always an attraction at any meeting), the group indulged in a breakfast buffet and then got down to business.

First on the agenda was establishing guidelines and selecting a name. The organization would be called Reader's Choice, since book selection would be subjective. Each meeting would focus on a genre and each participant would share at least one recent title (preferably published from 1979 to the present). A brief oral summary and any ideas for classroom use would be sufficient. So that each member could have organized notes, everyone agreed to write an outline-form review (no longer than one 8½ by 11 page) for the books. For each book read, members would write (1) a

brief summary of the book; (2) discussion questions or extension activities; (3) connections or related reading and audio-visual materials; (4) the teacher's own critical opinion; and (5) any special notes they wished to make (for example, if the book was a good read-aloud selection or was best for individual reading or for small groups). Meetings would remain informal and participants should come even if they hadn't finished their book or the written review.

The group decided to focus on five genres during the summer: historical fiction/nonfiction, fantasy, folk and fairy tales, poetry, and realistic fiction, and would meet every two weeks until school commenced in late August.

These eight to ten teachers, administrators, and librarians who gathered faithfully every other week were delighted by the success of the venture. Not only had they all read and shared at least five books (many had read a dozen or more), but they had also acquired a collection of reviews and specific activities and connections for using these titles with their students.

Everyone agreed that Reader's Choice should continue monthly during the school year and meet each second Wednesday from 5:00 to 7:00 p. m. at the Newark Public Library. Nancy McKenzie, children's librarian, graciously volunteered to make arrangements to use the meeting room and to provide coffee. Those attending would bring a snack to share.

The overwhelming enthusiasm of the Reader's Choice participants stems from a number of benefits from the venture. The sharing of ideas and the stimulation of devising creative approaches to teaching the titles read, not to mention the sheer fun and fellowship, all made the time involved in reading and reviewing the books seem more like recreation than like work. Soon all the regular participants had formed the habit of reading and reviewing both for fun and for professional enrichment.

Members hope in the future to expand the concept of Reader's Choice. Creating groups for students, for parents and teachers together, or even a group for sharing

contemporary adult fiction are possibilities. Inviting students to share their favorites with Reader's Choice members would be an excellent recognition for young readers, as well.

But perhaps the most useful by-product of Reader's Choice is this volume, the first annual compilation of reviews. The members of Reader's Choice feel the ultimate audience for sharing is the vast number of language arts teachers who continually look for good reading materials for their students and who have little time to read through great numbers of new titles each year.

This publication was made possible by funds from a grant awarded to N.O.T.E by the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation. Special thanks go to N.O.T.E president Pat Handelman and past-president Peggy Papritan for writing the grant. For their enthusiasm and willingness to devote time and energy to producing reviews for this volume, I thank the contributors.

Carole Lovett Koontz

Newark, Ohio

May, 1985

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# REALISTIC FICTION

Chernowitz! by Fran Arrick. Bradbury Press, 1981. 165 pages, $9.50. Signet Vista, 1983. 183 pages, $2.25. Grade 8+.

SUMMARY:

Bobby Cherno had not given his being Jewish much consideration until Emmett Sundback made his ninth-grade year miserable. Not only did he call Bobby names, but he marshalled Bobby's friends as well as other kids at school and in the neighborhood against Bobby. Bobby became a social isolate. Bobby's parents are concerned about his iolation, but he refuses to tell them about its basis or to let them interfere in any way. Emmett's assaults grow increasingly harsh until Bobby devises a plan to pay Emmett back. Bobby's plan is clever, devious, and well-executed, but he finds no satisfaction in his attempt to repay Emmett. In fact, his guilt finally allows him to share the whole story with his parents, and they in turn are able to provide an experience for the whole school that shows prejudice in its true light.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

If you read this title aloud, it's excellent for having students frequently project what they think will happen next.

List the assaults that Emmett Sundback commits against Bobby Cherno over a period of time.

Discuss the meaning of the title of the book.

Why did Bobby feel no satisfaction after he had punished Emmett?

CONNECTIONS:

Gentlehands; The Diary of Anne Frank (Holocaust themes); Black Boy (prejudice themes)

CRITICAL OPINION:

This was an extremely painful book for me to read. Arrick made Bobby Cherno's pain very real and it went on for half the book. I despaired of ever finding a reasonable solution to Bobby Cherno's problems that he could create and control. But Arrick pulled this one out for me. Bobby's solution to the problem is so clever and so suitable for the character that Arrick created but likewise so ultimately dissatisfying to him that I cheered Arrick for her masterful writing. Now that I've read the whole book, I find it one of the most unforgettable Young Adult titles I've ever read. I most enjoy those titles that show adolescents with real problems and admirable strengths, and Chernowitz! does just that.

I'd read this book aloud, although not as the first group experience of the year. Be apprised that the experience will be intense--but unforgettable--for both you and your students.

NOTES:

Themes: prejudice, survival, Holocaust

Judith Keck

The Least One by Borden Deal. Doubleday, 1967. Out of print.

SUMMARY:

To Lee Sword, a Southerner hit hard by the Depression, living at Bugscuffle Bottoms meant a chance to farm the land he loved. To his wife, Jimmie, it meant "dependence on others." John, their elder son, worked hard and said little. It was on their least one, Boy, that the place made its deepest impression. Boy was twelve, not wanting to leave childhood but not ready to be a man.

Because Boy lacks a real name, the other boys tease him and lead him into an encounter which very nearly sends him to reform school. He must learn to cope with his mother's attitude toward Bugscuffle Bottoms. (There is a hilarious account of her fight with Lilybelle Lollard, whom she catches stealing from her milk can.) Boy's father struggles to recover from injuries suffered in two accidents, both of which Boy feels were his fault. Humor runs through the entire story, which shows the struggles of a boy growing up.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

A lively discussion can be held by asking students how they feel about their given names. What name would they have chosen for themselves? Boy was supposed to choose a name for himself at the age of ten. Would they like to have to do that? What would they have done in the meantime, having been called "boy" or "girl"?

Have students write a paragraph telling what name they think Boy chose for himself (the book never tells), and why. This usually sparks an interest in researching meanings of names and also exploring how last names came into being.

CONNECTIONS:

Shelter on Blue Barns Road by C. S. Adler

It Had to Be You by Elizabeth Byrd

I Should Worry, I Should Care by Miriam Chaikin

CRITICAL OPINION:

This is an excellent read-aloud book, always having suspense to keep students "hanging."

Phyllis Fischer

Home Before Dark by Sue Ellen Bridgers. Knopf, 1976. $10.95. Bantam, 1977. $1.95. Grade 6+.

SUMMARY:

Stella Mae Willis has spent most of her fourteen years living out of a battered station wagon with her parents and her younger brothers and sister. They move from one picking station to another, staying a week here, a week there. The stories her father tells of the house he grew up in are tales of unknown and incredible events. Stella cannot believe there is such stability. When James Earl Willis takes his family back to the tobacco farm he was raised on, the land he loved, Stella becomes aware of her roots.

The house Uncle Newt gives them is just an old sharecropper's house, but to Stella it is a castle. With the help of Toby, a farmhand's son, she paints the house. Her aunt Anne helps with the interior and with some of the problems of growing up. In many ways Stella is more "street-wise" than her aunt. Stella has had responsibilities and knowledge other girls her age might never know as full-grown women: helping birth her mother Mae's babies--some not ready to survive--and sweating beside the others in parched fields at midday.

In spite of all these experiences, Stella lacks the knowledge to deal with Toby's friendship and the bold advances of Rodney Biggers. Her mother's tragic death, which she seemed to will upon herself, and her father's subsequent marriage to an older spinster, do much to mold and shape Stella.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

This is a very personal book and probably would be treated as such by a teacher. It would probably be of no interest to boys but would strike a special chord with many girls junior high age and up. I feel this book would fill certain needs that a teacher might spot, and so the best activity might be quiet discussions between reader and teacher. Some readers might attempt the warm style of Sue Ellen Bridgers in their own writings.

CONNECTIONS:

Other books by Bridgers, such as All Together Now, could be used with this book.

CRITICAL OPINION:

I would not recommend for read-aloud. This would be an individual silent reading book.

Phyllis Fischer

Hugo and the Princess Nena by Ella Thorp Ellis. Atheneum, 1983. 178 pp., $10.95. Grades 5-8.

SUMMARY:

Nena had met Hugo only once, before her mother and father were divorced, when Hugo had come to visit them in New York. Hugo, her mother's father and a poet, lived in California. Now Nena faced a whole year of living with Hugo, because her mother didn't think it was safe for her to be home alone in New York.

Hugo was just as she remembered him: long white hair, a cowboy hat, tall and skinny, and full of jokes, only some of which she understood. What she had not known was that Hugo did not like to be disturbed while he wrote (not even for Nena to go to the bathroom), and that she would be jealous of Irving, who swam with Hugo in the morning while she, afraid of the water, sat on the shore.

Nena had many adjustments to make: to the ocean; to Hugo and his liver-and-onion brew whirled up in an Osterizer; to Irving and Mollie, his mother who ran the local restaurant; and to a whole new kind of life. Yet Nena discovered that she and Irving could be friends, that she could share Hugo with others, that she loved having a trailer of her own (the solution to the bathroom problem), that she and Irving and Mr. Doggit--a neighbor--could rescue Hugo in the night from a hated hospital stay, and that most of all she could conquer her worst fears if she thought Hugo would be helped by it. In other words, Nena discovered several levels of love she had not known before.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

There are several problems that Nena encounters during the course of the book and goes about solving them in various ways. Ask students how they would have solved these problems. Have they ever been as frightened of something as Nena was of the ocean? If so, have they overcome this fear and how did they do it?

These questions could develop into writing activities. This book could be extended in several ways. What is going on back in New York with Nena's mother? What about the "creep" on the telephone? Does Hugo get better?

CONNECTIONS:

Other books by Ella Thorp Ellis are Roam the Wild Country, Celebrate the Morning, Riptide, Where the Road Ends, Halielujah, and Sleepwalker's Moon.

CRITICAL OPINION:

This is an excellent book for read-aloud or individual reading.

Phyllis Fischer

Notes for Another Life by Sue Ellen Bridgers. Knopf, 1981. $9.95. Bantam, 1982. $2.25 Grades 7-10.

SUMMARY:

Notes for Another Life is a story of a summer in the lives of thirteen-year-old Wren Jackson and her sixteen-year-old brother Kevin. Their mother lives in the city where she is pursuing her career. Their father is a frequent patient in the state mental hospital. Wren and Kevin have lived happily with their grandparents for years, even though they continuously yearn for their mother's love and attention. During this particular summer, Wren and Kevin must cope with their mother's upcoming move to Chicago, their parents' divorce, and their father's deteriorating mental state. Despite the potential here to create a depressing story, Bridgers manages to create a most uplifting effect. The characters are realistic, sympathetic, and interesting. This book has no "happily ever after" resolution, but the reader comes away feeling hopeful and satisfied with developments.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Why did the author give the book its name?

When did you realize that Karen had no intention of reuniting with her children?

Which scene was the most powerful to you?

CONNECTIONS:

Home Before Dark by Sue Ellen Bridgers

Ordinary People (book and film)

Related topics: suicide, divorce, mental illness

CRITICAL OPINION:

This is a powerful story, beautifully told. The characters are so believable, especially for the relative shortness of the book. I recommend it as a read-aloud for seventh or eighth graders.

Louanne Knack

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Space Station Seventh Grade by Jerry Spinelli. Little, Brown, 1982. 192 pp., $12.45. Dell, 1984. 240 pp., $2.50. Grade 7+.

SUMMARY:

Jason Herkimer, former sixth grade "big shot," has been rudely awakened by his entry into seventh grade. He has become a nobody, invisible to the ninth graders who run the school. Jason discusses his frustrations in dealing with girls, sports, school, and family. The text is funny, irreverent, earthy, and perceptive. Jason comes to the end of the year with new understandings of himself, his friends, and his world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Which of Jason's chapters were easiest for you to identify with?

If you could add chapters to this book, what would the titles be?

CONNECTIONS:

Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing by Judy Blume

CRITICAL OPINION:

This book would work best with mature sixth, seventh, and eighth graders, especially boys. Only certain chapters would lend themselves to a read-aloud session (screen them first!).

I enjoyed this book and recommend it for moms, too!

Louanne Knack

Switching Tracks by Dean Hughes. Atheneum, 1982. 180 pp., $14.95. Grades 5-9.

SUMMARY:

Mark's life has changed completely. His father has died, mother gone to work in a low-paying position, and the family has moved to a smaller house in a poorer neighborhood. Mark hates his new school and the kids on the school bus who make fun of the old man who lives down the block. Mark was once a good student, but now all he wants to do is play electronic games at the arcade. These games help to blot out the disturbing circumstances of his father's death. Willard, the old man down the street, offers to pay Mark for helping him redo his elaborate train set-up in his basement. At first, Mark does this only as a means of earning money in order to play the games. As Mark and Willard work together and share their feelings by assuming the characters of people Willard once knew, they become friends. Still Mark cannot confide the events of his father's death, and he finally collapses under the guilt and strain. The friendship of Mark and Willard is then put to the true test.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

This is a good book for interesting boys in some different reading material and getting them into novels. This story would adapt itself very well for role-playing since Mark and Willard do that themselves in the book. Some good questions could be raised for problem-solving, such as "How would you have reacted to these certain situations? What would you have done differently?"

CONNECTIONS:

Some other books by Dean Hughes are Nutty for President and Honestly, Myron. If you have a boy in class who seems to be struggling with loneliness or having difficulty making friends, or even contemplating suicide, this book might help the child.

CRITICAL OPINION:

I would recommend the book for individual reading for the above reasons.

Phyllis Fischer

# FANTASY

# FOLK TALES

Best-loved Folktales of the World, selected by Joanna Cole. Doubleday, 1983. 816 pp., $15.95; paper, $8.95.

SUMMARY:

This treasury of two-hundred folk and fairy tales from around the world, selected for their popularity and the pleasure they offer all ages, is a major new anthology in its field.

Gathered in this wide-ranging collection are familiar classics like "Snow White" and "Sleeping Beauty" and stories that equal them from all major cultures. Here are old favorites and new discoveries, arranged geographically by region--West and East Europe, British Isles, Scandinavia, Middle East, Asia, the Pacific, Africa, North America, Caribbean, and Central and South America. Together they offer magic, adventure, laughter, reflection, vivid images, and a throng of colorful characters--tricksters, princesses, witches, ogres, noodleheads, and stepmothers--in stories of every genre. Animal fables, proverbs, ghost stories, funny tales, and tales of enchantment provide hours of reading pleasure.

This anthology offers two indexes: an index of categories of tales and an alphabetical index. The table of contents divides the tales into their respective regions and countries. With these three handy reference guides, appropriate stories for any occasion can be easily located.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

I would recommend this book being used and kept as part of a teacher's permanent reference file. It could be used in conjunction with social studies lessons, music and art lessons, or whenever there would be a few extra moments to share a story.

This would be a good source for students to find different versions of the Cinderella theme, for example. (Mrs. Cole states that there are at least 345 versions.) Students could also discuss how certain themes tend to appear in almost every culture. Students could attempt writing their own versions of certain themes.

Since this book has no illustrations, students could use their imaginations to provide drawings, create three-dimensional models, etc.

CONNECTIONS:

This book could be used with any other folk tale materials, picture books, poems, films, etc.

CRITICAL OPINION:

This is an excellent desk text. It would probably be best for read-aloud, but could be used for small or large group instruction, or for individual reading.

Phyllis Fischer

Carrot Holes and Frisbee Trees by N. B. Bodecker. Atheneum, 1983. 40 pp., $12.95. Grades 4-6.

SUMMARY:

William and Pippin Plumtree were the envy of their neighborhood because of the huge vegetables they grew in their garden. But once the vegetables reached huge--they didn't stop! This is the story of carrots so big that a block and tackle was necessary to remove them from the ground. The Plumtrees faced finding uses for carrots even after they had been

> cutting carrots into sections like cordwood, splitting them with an axe like kindling, carrying it in, dicing it on the chopping board, and cooking and canning every last bit. . . [to have] carrot pancakes with carrot jam and carrot juice for breakfast.

This is also the story of a problem that grew and grew and the attempts to solve it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Create a chart that identifies the problems the Plumtrees had, how they solved each problem, and if the solution worked.

The story concludes with "What happened to their parsley another year. . . now that is quite a different story." Create a group story about the problems of parsley.

CONNECTIONS:

James and the Giant Peach

CRITICAL OPINION:

I really liked this book because it's very imaginative and has a problem-solving focus. It would be a good read-aloud and could make a good science connection to studying plants. While it's a small book with illustrations, don't be deceived that it could be read by a third grader: the vocabulary is not simple and the humor is fairly sophisticated. Illustrations by Nina Winters are super! Consider this title for gifted students, but don't restrict its use only to them.

NOTES:

Themes: humor, fantasy, creativity

Judith Keck

A Furl of Fairy Wind by Mollie Hunter. Harper and Row, 1977. 58 pp. $10.53. Grades 2-5.

SUMMARY:

Four engaging tales of brownies and fairies reveal Mollie Hunter's story-telling ability. "The Brownie" explains what brownies are and tells the consequences of one woman's lack of belief in brownies. "The Enchanted Boy" relates the fate of a boy who, wandering into the forest on Midsummer's Eve, was enchanted by the queen of the fairies. "Hi Johnny" reveals how a peddler finds the secret of happiness after a visit with the fairies. In "A Furl of Fairy Wind," a young girl who dares to counter fairy magic saves a young baby and his mother.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Read more about fairies (see list below). Create stories, poems, and artwork about fairies.

Students can make and illustrate their own Brownie Calendar in the fashion of Palmer Cox's Brownie's Year Book.

Pose the question "Why have people for centuries continued to tell stories about fairies and elves?" and discuss how fairy stories are different from, say, ghost stories. Talk about how in folkloric tradition, unexplainable events are attributed to supernatural beings and forces. (Note that the "furl of fairy wind" is much like a tornado.)

CONNECTIONS:

Cox, Palmer. Brownie's Year Book. In The Illustrated Treasury of Children's Literature, Margaret E. Martignoni, ed. Grosset and Dunlap, 1955.

Hopkins, Lee Bennet. Elves, Fairies, and Gnomes. Knopf, 1980.

Manson, Beverlie. The Fairies Alphabet Book. Doubleday, 1982.

Nic Leodhas, Sorche. "The Woman Who Flummoxed the Fairies." In Thistle and Thyme: Tales and Legends from Scotland. London: The Bodley Head, 1975.

Softly, Barbara. Magic People Around the World. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970.

Wallace, Daisy, ed. Fairy Poems. Holiday House, 1980.

CRITICAL OPINION:

This collection of four stories is an excellent choice as a read-aloud book. The stories are short and sure to hold students' interest.

Carole Lovett Koontz

The Indian in the Cupboard by Lynn Reed Banks. Doubleday, 1981. 192 pp. $9.95. Avon, $2.25. Grades 4-8.

SUMMARY:

Omri's friend Patrick gives him a plastic Indian for his birthday and his brother presents him with a wooden cupboard. Later, searching through a collection of old keys, Omri finds an ornate old one that just fits his new cupboard.

Omri locks his Indian in the cupboard for the night. The next morning, Omri is awakened by a noise from the cupboard, and upon opening it, he finds that the Indian has been brought to life!

And so follows a humorous series of events in which Omri tries to bring life's comforts to Little Bear, his bossy and confused miniature Indian. Omri's instinct tells him not to reveal his secret to a soul, but his friend Patrick manages to find out the truth and insists on bringing a plastic cowboy to life. Instant enemies, Little Bear and Boone, the cowboy, make Omri's life miserable.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

What important lesson did Omri learn from his experience?

Had you been Omri, would you have done anything differently?

CONNECTIONS:

The Littles

The Borrowers

Travels of Jonathan Swift

CRITICAL OPINION:

This book contains plenty of action and suspense to make it a good read-aloud.

Louanne Knack

Justice and Her Brothers by Virginia Hamilton. Greenwillow Books, 1978. 224 pp., $12.50. Avon, 1981. $1.95. Grade 7+.

SUMMARY:

An eleven-year-old girl named Justice plays constantly with her older brothers, who are twins. Thomas and Levi seem to communicate with each other without actually talking, but Ticey (Justice's nickname) cannot understand their mode of communication.

The two boys decide to have a snake race with their friends. Ticey wants to be included, so she bikes alone to a swamp to practice picking up the snakes. She also devises a bike stunt to perform for the boys.

The big day of the contest arrives. Ticey goes along with all the boys to catch snakes. She attempts to perform her bike stunt on the hill going to the swamp, but an oncoming car causes her to lose control of her bike. She is humiliated and goes off by herself to catch a snake. She finds a very large snake and puts it in her knapsack.

When everyone arrives home, Ticey discovers the contest is not actually a race between the snakes; the object of the game is to catch the most snakes. She is astounded. All the snakes are placed in various containers and are counted the next morning. Ticey's snake has babies overnight and she is declared the winner, much to the chagrin of the boys.

At the end of the book, Ticey becomes aware that she and another boy have the powers of telepathy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

What was the role of The Sensitive? Describe what happened to the characters when they used telepathy.

Research telepathy and write about what you discover.

Try some of the simple mind-power experiments done in the book and write about the experience.

Write a story using the main characters and devising a situation in which they can use telepathy.

CONNECTIONS:

Two more books are in this series: The Gathering and Dustland. Dustland involves the four children going to a planet known as Dustland. They encounter many creatures and a bleak atmosphere. In The Gathering, they return to Dustland and encounter Mal, who controls the future.

CRITICAL OPINION:

This is an excellent book and would probably best be read by students with high academic ability. Hamilton's imagination is incredible and, at times, unbelievable.

Debbie Farynowski
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The Knight of the Golden Plain by Mollie Hunter. Harper and Row, 1983. 43 pp., $10.95. Grades K-4.

SUMMARY:

This book begins with the question, "If you were dreaming one day of the adventures you would like to have, who would you choose to be? And what would you do then?" The story that follows is the tale of Sir Dauntless, who in typical knightly fashion, slays dragons, fights a demon magician (Arriman), finds a lovely damsel (Dorabella) in distress, successfully completes a quest in order to free Dorabella from the evil powers of Arriman, and destroys Arriman.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Talk about the classic conflict of good and evil. Have students give examples from other sources (stories, movies, TV shows).

Encourage students to learn about knights and explain that much early literature centered around tales of knights and their deeds, the code of chivalry, and so on. (See reading list below.) Possibly lead into a unit on the Arthurian legends.

Compare/contrast the classical knights and the Jedi knights of the Star Wars films.

Have students respond to the initial question of the book (see summary) and write or tell their "daydream."

CONNECTIONS:

Buehr, Walter. Knights and Castles and Feudal Life. Putnam, 1957.

----------. Knights and Knighthood. Putnam, 1963.

Gibson, Michael. The Knights. Arco, 1979.

Glubok, Shirley. Knights in Armor. Harper and Row, 1969.

Heiderstadt, Dorothy. Knights and Champions. Nelson, 1960.

Lewellen, J.B. True Book of Knights. Childrens Press, 1956.

Peterson, Harold L. A History of Body Armor. Scribners, 1968.

Suskind, Richard. Men in Armor. Norton, 1968.

Yolen, Jane. The Acorn Quest. Crowell, 1981.

CRITICAL OPINION:

The story exhibits the potential of the imagination (in daydreams) and invites readers to create their own tales. As well, the story follows the typical pattern and includes motifs of the medieval romance. Marc Simont's illustrations are good, but be aware of the devilishly funny one on page 20.

Carole Lovett Koontz

A Necklace of Fallen Stars by Beth Hilgartner. Little, Brown, 1979. 209 pp., $8.95. Grade 5+.

SUMMARY:

Give up her colorful, independent life telling stories in the marketplace to marry the cold, ruthless Duke Gavrin? Princess Kaela vows "Never!" Flouting her father's wishes--and resolving to ignore her sister's fears--Kaela sets out alone for a distant kingdom, determined to make her own way and live her own life in the way she loves best: by weaving tales for anyone who will lend an ear. (Placed throughout the book are the tales Kaela weaves as she makes her way through this adventure.)

Her gift serves her well, for as a result of the first tale she tells in a village inn, she meets Kippen, the minstrel who accompanies her on her journey. The journey becomes perilous when the two discover that Kaela is being pursued by an unscrupulous sorcerer who has been sent by her outraged father to track her down. During this pursuit, the two are aided by the "White Lady," who provides a winged horse for their escape.

Living by their talents and their wits, as well as with the help of those like the "White Lady," Kaela and Kippen wander the back roads of the kingdom. At last, the king, troubled by his order to have Kaela brought back and tried for treason, suffers a breakdown and dies. Before dying, the king implores that the search be stopped and declares Kaela forgiven. Kaela's last tale, from which the book is titled, tells of her love for Kippen and of her wish to remain a storyteller.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Why do you think stories of fantasy have always been so popular? What purpose does fantasy have in our lives? What sorts of things have come about in our world because people dared to fantasize?

Continue Kaela's and Kippen's adventures and write another tale for her. Some students might enjoy drawing scenes from the story and making models (of the winged horse, for example).

CONNECTIONS:

Dream Weaver by Jane Yolen

CRITICAL OPINION:

I feel this is an excellent book, especially for someone who is reluctant to read fantasy, as I was. I would recommend small or large group instruction or individual reading.

Phyllis Fischer

A Stranger Came Ashore by Mollie Hunter. Harper and Row, 1975. 192 pp., $11.89; paper, $2.95. Grades 5+.

SUMMARY:

A night of a severe storm, a shipwreck and the sudden appearance of a stranger--that is how it all begins. The stranger is Finn Learson, a young and handsome man who seems the only survivor of the wreck. Mollie Hunter tells a suspenseful, fast-paced story of Finn Learson's peculiar existence.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

At the end of each chapter discuss examples of words and ideas the author used to keep the story full of suspense and fast paced.

What other mythical creatures live in the sea?

What one event might have changed the outcome of the story? Tell or write your variation on Mollie Hunter's story. Would a change of events improve the story? Why or why not?

CONNECTIONS:

The "High King" series by Lloyd Alexander

The Dark Is Rising series by Susan Cooper

Other Mollie Hunter books:

The Walking Stones

A Sound of Chariots

Hold On to Love

CRITICAL OPINION:

This is an excellent book. Charlotte Huck recommends Mollie Hunter as an outstanding storyteller.

Karen Bagent

The Witch's Brat by Rosemary Sutcliff. Walck, 1970. 143 pp. Out of print.

SUMMARY:

Lovel, a young boy, is abandoned after his grandmother dies. His grandmother had healed people with herbal medicine. She had taught Lovel her method of growing herbs, but since the neighbors feared her, they feared Lovel, too and thought he was associated with the devil. The townspeople threw stones at Lovel, forcing him to leave the village.

Lovel wandered around the countryside and eventually was nursed back to health by the monks in a minster. He was given odd jobs until the monks discovered his gift with herbs and medicine. Lovel worked in the infirmary for many years. He decided to become a monk and began his one year as a novice.

Rahere, once a king's comic, asked Lovel to join him in starting a hospital outside London for poor people. Lovel was faced with a difficult decision; he finally gave up being a monk and helped to start the hospital. While working at the hospital, Lovel discovered a young boy who was crippled. (Lovel himself had a humped back and a twisted leg.) Over a period of six months, Lovel straightened this boy's leg.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Students could research aspects (such as a monk's life) of this time period in English history.

Several vocabulary words could be researched: canons, Jongleur, manor, kale broth, minster, monastery, courser, minstrel, physic garden, mason, dispensary.

Students could also research the science of herbs used as medicines to cure certain ills.

Why was Lovel's handicap significant to Nick?

Why was the story titled The Witch's Brat?

CONNECTIONS:

Students might enjoy reading other books by Sutcliff, such as Knight's Fee and The Shield Ring (the Norman England series).

CRITICAL OPINION:

The book is good, but perhaps the time period may appeal to a select group. Some of the vocabulary is difficult to understand, but context provides the meanings of these words. The book would be better for individual reading rather than for group reading since there is more descriptive reading than dialogue.

Debbie Farynowski

# HISTORICAL FICTION

Across Five Aprils by Irene Hunt. Ace Books, 1984. 192 pp., $2.25.

SUMMARY:

The five Aprils referred to in the title are those from 1861-1865, encompassing the Civil War. This is a beautifully written account of the war's impact on nine-year-old Jethro Creighton, whose three older brothers, a close cousin, and a beloved teacher go off to fight for the Union Army. Jethro's closest brother, however, joins the Confederacy, an act destined to bring grief and some community ill will to his southern-Illinois family.

After his father's heart attack, ten-year-old Jethro assumes the burden of running the family farm while furthering his education and following the war in personal letters and in the local newspapers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Find, read, and share what you learn about Civil War era newspapers, battles, maps, generals, Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address," family Bibles, and old grammar textbooks.

CONNECTIONS:

Look for books that feature the impact of the Civil War on a Southern family.

Up a Road Slowly by Irene Hunt; play a cassette tape of excerpts.

CRITICAL OPINION:

This is a good book for those aware of the Civil War. I recommend it for mature readers who persevere, for there is little action and much dialogue.

Louanne Knack

The Amethyst Ring by Scott O'Dell. Houghton Mifflin, 1983. 224 pp., $12.95.
Grade 7+.

SUMMARY:

One finds it hard to believe that Julian Escobar, a young seminarian turned Mayan god, had ever entertained any Christian compassion or training. So corrupted by greed and ambition as has been true of other Spaniards who infiltrated the Mayan and Azteca civilizations, the ruthless Julian moves into the heart of Inca country deep in Peru. Here, he falls into the ranks of Pizzaro, another ruthless conquistador who deceitfully betrays his promise to the Inca ruler Atahualpa and sees to his merciless death.

Atahualpa's daughter, Chima, becomes Julian's confidante. He briefly nurtures the idea of Christianizing her, but upon her father's death, she spurns him and retreats to The Temple of the Sun. Heartbroken at perhaps his only encounter with true love, Julian embarks on a journey back to Spain. Penniless and tormented by his errant and heathen life, he finds solitude among the Brothers of the Poor.

The title of this book refers to the ring worn by the Spanish bishop Predoza, whose death Julian ordered. In the darkness of night, Julian takes the ring from the bishop's corpse and wears it thereafter. Several characters recognize the ring and repeatedly question Julian's identity. The ring is the one element O'Dell uses that could be analyzed in terms of its symbolism and recurring thread of continuity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Research the rise and fall of the Inca Empire.

Research the Spanish conquistador, Pizzaro.

Draw a map outlining the extent of the Inca Empire.

Compare and contrast the Azteca and Incan Empires.

Compare and contrast the Azteca and Incan rulers, Moctezuma and Atahualpa.

Create a time line of historical events that occurred from The Captive through The Amethyst Ring.

CRITICAL OPINION:

Some would definitely find objectionable the very strong language in this book even though it occurs in Spanish most of the time. Of the trilogy, this is the most interesting book, although I think most readers would be expecting Julian to regain his original Christian identity. In this respect, one would be disappointed. Julian's fate is quite deserving, but not exemplary of "good winning out over evil."

Kathy Strohl

The Captive by Scott O'Dell. Houghton Mifflin, 1979. 244 pp., $9.95. Grade 7+.

SUMMARY:

Julian Escobar, a young Spanish seminarian, sets forth for the New World in the early 1500s, intent upon spreading Christianity among the Mayan natives. Quite early in the journey, he realizes that the leaders of the expedition, Don Luis, Captain Roa, and Baltasar Guzman, have no desire to make peace with the natives--only to capitalize on slave trade and the extraction of gold from their storehouses.

A shipwreck finds Julian the sole survivor on an island in the West Indies. He makes friends with a Mayan girl, and he tries to convert her. Later he encounters a dwarf who tells him that the natives sacrifice all Spaniards and his only hope of survival among the natives is to assume the guise of the long-departed Mayan god Kukulcan. Because of his height, his blond hair and blue eyes, he is accepted by the natives as the god himself--so much so that Julian loses all the values of the seminarian he once was and becomes empowered by greed, ambition, and the heathen rites of the natives.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

What indicates that Julian Escobar has totally assumed the role of Kukulcan?

List the historical facts mentioned in the story that characterize true places, names, and events of this time period.

Research the Mayan Empire and development.

Construct a map of the Spanish explorations of the New World.

Research the history of the Mayan gods and the religious beliefs and rites practiced in the 1500s.

Research the rise and fall of the Aztec Empire as it developed under the rule of Moctezuma.

CONNECTIONS:

This book would be good reading in conjunction with a study of the explorers of the New World in American history. Cortes, Pizzaro, de Soto, etc. are all mentioned.

CRITICAL OPINION:

Use this book with only a select audience. It's not a good read-aloud book or series because of some very strong language and violent acts that occur in the later books.

The Captive seems to have a slow beginning, but action moves along more rapidly as the story unfolds.

Kathy Strohl

The Feathered Serpent by Scott O'Dell. Houghton Mifflin, 1981. 224 pp., $10.95. Grade 7+.

SUMMARY:

Julian Escobar has fully assumed the guise of the Mayan god Kukulcan and is concerned with the defense of his City of the Seven Serpents. He has learned that Don Luis still lives--having survived the shipwreck of the Santa Margarita--and is a major threat to his city.

Kukulcan decides to strike first and claims a major victory. At this time, it is learned that a Spaniard by the name of Hernan Cortes is invading the surrounding territories and ransacking the villages for the natives' treasures. He is also a threat to the Azteca Empire of Moctezuma. Kukulcan, too, is bent on capturing Moctezuma's empire and encounters him in his palace. Moctezuma is skeptical, yet a very religious man, and ponders the meaning of Kukulcan's arrival and mistakenly thinks he may be the man "Cortes" that he has heard of.

In The Feathered Serpent, Kukulcan and his dwarf friend, Cantu, witness the fall of the Azteca Empire at the hands of the villainous Cortes and are lucky to escape with their lives.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

In what way has the young native Mayan girl aided Don Luis in his schemes of treachery and deceit?

What are the chief causes of Moctezuma's downfall, based on deductions you can draw from the story and other historical accounts?

Write a biographical sketch of the Spanish explorer Hernando Cortes. Be sure to include a detailed account of his capture of the Aztec Empire.

Write a biographical sketch of the Aztec ruler Moctezuma.

Draw a map outlining the realm of the Aztec Empire.

CRITICAL OPINION:

This would not be a good read-aloud book. Some of the violent deaths and atrocities that occur would probably not appeal to the female audience at all. This book could possibly be read separately from The Captive, but it would take a young reader a while to figure out who some of the characters are and what their role is in the over-all story. I think this book moves much faster and is much more exciting than The Captive.

Kathy Strohl

The Gift of Sarah Barker by Jane Yolen. Viking Press, 1981. 156 pp., $12.50. Scholastic, 1983. 192 pp., $1.95. Grades 7+.

SUMMARY:

A love story set in a fictional Shaker community in 1854, The Gift of Sarah Barker presents a compelling portrait of the harsh Shaker lifestyle. Sarah and young Abel Church face a series of conflicts--both physical and spiritual--as they find themselves questioning the lifestyle that was theirs by chance. Their eventual expulsion from the colony is a triumph rather than a tragedy, for in the outside world, they make more of their lives than did those who clung to the fanatacism of the doomed Shaker sect.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Read more about the Shakers and their lifestyle. Find music to the hymns and perform some for classmates.

What character in the book evoked some strong feeling (pity, hate, etc.) in you? Explain in writing.

Why do you suppose none of the older Shakers dared to leave the colony?

What was Sarah's "gift"?

CONNECTIONS:

Faber, Doris. The Perfect Life: The Shakers in America. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974.

Gift To Be Simple: Songs, Dances, and Rituals of the American Shakers. Peter Smith.

Gordon, Beverly. Shaker Textile Arts. University Press of New England, 1980.

Shakers of Ohio. Rpt. of the 1907 edition. Porcupine Press.

Yolen, Jane. Simple Gifts: The Story of the Shakers. Viking, 1976.

CRITICAL OPINION:

Jane Yolen's gift for narrative makes this book highly readable. She weaves facts about the Shakers into the narrative without detracting from the story. Although Yolen attempts to portray the Shakers as objectively and accurately as possible, she intends for the reader to sympathize with Sarah and Able's rejection of the unnatural tenets of the Shakers.

Carole Lovett Koontz

Incident at Hawk's Hill by Allan W. Eckert. Little, Brown, 1971. 173 pp., $12.95. Dell, 1972. $2.25. Grade 7+.

SUMMARY:

This story is a slightly fictionalized version of an incident which actually occurred in Canada in 1870. The prairies some twenty miles north of Winnipeg, through which the Red River flowed, were still largely wild. Here and there on the gently rolling hills were farms with a home, barn, and numerous outbuildings. On one of these farms lived the William MacDonald family. The MacDonalds had four children: John, sixteen; Beth, twelve; Coral, nine; and Benjamin, six. It is around Benjamin that the story revolves.

Benjamin is small for his age and very shy, especially around adults, but he has a strange affinity for animals, and they for him. While wandering his beloved hills and prairie one Sunday afternoon, Ben, as a result of a violent, blinding storm, embarks on one of the strangest encounters between human and animal ever documented. When Ben becomes disoriented and loses his way, he seeks shelter in a den occupied by a female badger whose young have died. The mothering the badger offers and the love Ben gives in return make for a gripping story which does not end when Ben is found and taken home.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Have you read any other stories which involved a closeness of this type? What can this story tell us about the loving and nurturing instinct of animals? Have you experienced examples of love from your own pets?

Since the story leaves us wondering what happened to the badger, students will very eagerly extend the story by writing another "chapter."

CONNECTIONS:

There is a film version of this story which might be obtained by making inquiries at your various film outlets.

The Peppermint Pig by Nina Bawden.

A Girl Called Bob and a Horse Called Yoki by Barbara Campbell.

Ribsy by Beverly Cleary.

New Day for Dragon by Lynn Hall.

CRITICAL OPINION:

This is an excellent read-aloud book.

Phyllis Fischer

The Night Journey by Kathryn Lasky. Warne, 1981. 160 pp, $8.95. Grades 4-9.

SUMMARY:

During secret, late-night meetings with her great-grandmother, Rachel Lewis learns the gripping story of how her "Nana Sashie" and her family escaped czarist Russia, where Jews were murdered if they failed to serve the czar. Rachel discovers a dimension of life quite different from her modern teenage concerns. She understands the reality of human suffering and courage. Rachel matures as she realizes that what she has learned about her great-grandmother's past has forever altered her perception of life and death.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

What was Wolf's secret?

Why did Rachel take so long to cry after Nana Sashie died?

What stories have your older relatives shared with you about their past? Tape record "oral histories" of relatives/friends; share tapes; write responses to the contents of the tapes.

If you were denied freedom but wanted to be free, how would you escape? Create a fictional place, circumstances, characters, and write the story of the escape.

CONNECTIONS:

What is Purim? Read about it and other Jewish holidays.

The Jewish calendar differs from the Julian calendar. Read about these and other calendars that have existed in various civilizations.

Trace the escape route on a map of Russia.

Adler, David A. A Picture Book of Jewish Holidays. Holiday House, 1981.

Cone, Molly. The Jewish New Year. Crowell, 1966.

----------. The Jewish Sabbath. Crowell, 1966.

----------, Purim. Crowell, 1967.

Greenfield, Howard. Chanukah. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976.

----------. Passover. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978.

Lazar, Wendy. The Jewish Holiday Book. Doubleday, 1977.

CRITICAL OPINION:

This is an excellent book--well-written, suspenseful, artistically done. I would recommend this for older readers, too, since the author doesn't write down to the reader. The vocabulary is rich enough and the structure of the novel is complex enough to hold an adult's interest. Carole Lovett Koontz

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Sarah Bishop by Scott O'Dell. Houghton Mifflin, 1980. $10.95. Scholastic, 1982. $1.95.

SUMMARY:

This book is based upon the life of Sarah Bishop, who was born in England and came to the colonies shortly before the American Revolution. Her father was loyal to King George. Because of his loyalty, a gang of young rebels burned their farm and tarred and feathered her father. Her brother, Chad, joined the army and when Sarah discovered he had starved to death on a British prison ship, she fled the British and traveled until she came to the wilderness of upper New York. There she lived on Long Pond, known to the Indians as Waccabuc. Sarah lived in a cave and received help from an Indian family. At the end of the story, she was accused of witchery because she had a white bat in her cave. Isaac Morton helped convince the townspeople that their dry weather and sickness were not caused by the white bat.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Compare Speare's Sign of the Beaver and Sarah Bishop. How were Sarah and Matt helped by the Indians?

O'Dell expresses love for all living things--plant, animals, and people. Find examples in the story.

How would the story have been if Sarah's father had remained neutral about the Revolution?

Find examples of O'Dell's message, "Forgive your enemies and have respect for life."

Use with eighth graders studying the American Revolution.

CONNECTIONS:

Why Don't You Get a Horse, Sam Adams? by Fritz

CRITICAL OPINION:

This book is excellent. Read it aloud to older students or use for independent reading.

NOTES:

O'Dell addresses girls in most of his books. He feels women are preservers of life: they have the children; they are conditioned emotionally to respect life and to preserve it. He is working on a book about St. Francis. In it he is making a strong statement against war.

Karen Bagent

Sign of the Beaver by Elizabeth George Speare. Houghton Mifflin, 1983. 144 pp. Dell, 1984. 144 pp., $2.50. Grade 4+.

SUMMARY:

This story takes place in Maine in the 1700s. Thirteen-year-old Matt and his father have spent several months building a cabin and planting a garden. Eventually, the father must return to Massachusetts to bring Matt's mother and sisters to their new home. Matt is left alone to take care of things for what was supposed to be only seven weeks but turns into six months by the end of the story.

He is visited one day by an Indian boy, Attean, and his grandfather. The grandfather wants Matt to teach Attean to read and Matt tries hard to do so. But more importantly, Matt and Attean learn to care about one another and understand some of each other's way of life.

This story includes lots of detail about Indian trapping, hunting, and fishing.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

When Matt's father left, Matt had a gun. How did Matt lose it?

In the end, Matt and Attean exchange gifts. What did each give the other and why was it important?

What does the title mean?

Discuss Matt's feelings about war. (Relate to My Brother Sam Is Dead, Sarah Bishop, and Summer of My German Soldier.

Discuss differences and similarities between Matt's and Attean's lifestyles, homes, clothing, etc. (Relate to Sing Down the Moon, L. I. Wilder books, and even Trouble River by Byars for the time period.)

CONNECTIONS:

My Side of the Mountain by Jean C. George

Light in the Forest

Fawn by Robert Newton Peck

Taste of Blackberries

Call It Courage

Island of the Blue Dolphins

Julie of the Wolves

CRITICAL OPINION:

Excellent read-aloud, small group, large group, or individual selection

Judith Keck and Linda Woolard
33

The Valley of the Shadow by Janet Hickman. Macmillan, 1974. 215 pp.

SUMMARY:

In 1781, Young Tobias's life as a Moravian in Salem, Ohio, was dangerous and terrifying. He was constantly aware of the Long Knives (Virginians) and several warring Indian tribes. Tobias was lost in the woods, nearly drowned, often hungry, and captured by the Indians. He escaped death when he hid in a cellar beneath the scene of the bloody Gnadenhutten Massacre.

Tobias's natural curiosity often got him into trouble and made his father ashamed of him. Once, while listening to his father and Chief Buckongehelas of the Delawares discuss business, Tobias caught his foot in the cellar window.

The elder Moravians from Schoenbrunn, Salem, and Gnadenhutten constantly met with various Indian tribes in an attempt to maintain their villages. Eventually, the Moravians were ordered to leave their towns and reolcate on the Sandusky River. This difficult journey forced Tobias to grow up quickly.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Discuss the various religious groups that settled in Ohio. Focus on Amish, Moravians, Mormons, Mennonites, Shakers, Quakers, and Zoarites.

Discuss the early settlement of Southeastern Ohio. Work with the Ohio history teacher on joint projects.

In what ways do human relationships remain constant? Have you ever felt that you have not lived up to your parents' expectations? Tobias learned that some of his fears were real and some were not. Have you had some of the same kinds of experiences?

The major events of this story, as well as a good part of the minor ones, are matters of recorded history. Of the principal characters, only Jonathan and Anna Rebecca are invented. What would be involved in researching such a book?

This all takes place in Ohio. What places were familiar to you? Which names have been changed? A study of the different lifestyles of various Indian tribes could be developed.

CONNECTIONS:

Tecumseh: Destiny's Warrior by David C. Cooke

The Story of Mad Anthony Wayne by Hazel Wilson

Other books by Janet Hickman include Zoar Blue, set during the Civil War, and The Stones, set during World War II.

CRITICAL OPINION:

This book makes Ohio history seem real. It is a good book filled with exciting events and would provide an easy way for students to learn about the Gnadenhutten Massacre and the Moravian settlements in Ohio. This book could be used as a read-aloud with small or large group instruction.

Carolyn Smith and Phyllis Fischer

War Comes to Willy Freeman by James L. and Christopher Collier. Delacorte, 1983. 178 pp., $12.95. Grade 7+.

SUMMARY:

A free thirteen-year-old Black girl named Willy is growing up in Connecticut during the Revolutionary War. Willy takes her father on horseback to Fort Griswold to fight. Willy cannot leave the fort and witnesses her father's death. She avoids being caught by the British but races home to find that her mother has been captured. In great distress, Willy goes to Stratford to see her aunt Betty, uncle Jack, and cousin Dan. In her haste, Willy does not take her free papers; the Ivers family (owners of Aunt Betty and Uncle Jack) want to make Willy a slave. Willy disguises herself as a boy and escapes to New York City, where her mother was being held.

She is unable to find her mother and begins working at a tavern which serves the British. She becomes friends with Horace, who does not suspect she is a girl for a long time. Eventually Willy tells him and they begin to fall in love.

At the end of the war, Willy leaves the tavern in search of her mother. Willy discovers that her mother is very sick and is staying with Uncle Jack. When her mother dies, Willy becomes hysterical and Mr. Ivers begins to beat her. Uncle Jack strikes Mr. Ivers, an action which leads to a court case. He is acquitted and Willy goes back to the tavern in New York.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Why is it important for Willy to disguise herself as a boy?

What part did Mr. Goodrich play in helping Willy?

It would be fun to have the students research the battle of Fort Griswold, life for prisoners, the tavern, and perhaps the people. Their papers could distinguish between the reality of the times and the fiction of the book.

Students could build a replica of Fort Griswold.

Students could research the part that Blacks took during the war. It is emphasized in the book that a Black was free when he fought in the war.

CONNECTIONS:

The sequel to this book, Jump Ship to Freedom is about Uncle Jack and his plan to buy the freedom for his wife and son.

CRITICAL OPINION:

The story is excellent. Readers will want to keep reading to see what happens next. However, there are two questionable parts in the book. The first involves cursing ("God damn you to hell"). The second involves a British soldier and Willy: "Suddenly he reached his hand out to my shirt and felt for my breasts. . . . It gave me a queer, dirty feeling to have him mess with my body like that." I recommend this book for individual reading.

Debbie Farynowski

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# NONFICTION

Children of the Wild West by Russell Freedman. Clarion Books, 1983. 128 pp., $12.95. Grades 3-6.

SUMMARY:

Children of the Wild West provides an overview of the settlement of the West from 1840 to the early 1900s and explains briefly how children lived during that period. The author presents information on home life, schools, games, parties, and celebrations. Both American Indian children and pioneer children are included in the book, which features many excellent photos from the period. As a brief introduction, the author explains how frontier photographers took pictures. The book is indexed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Visit local historical societies and look at the old photos of your town/area. What do the photos tell you about lifestyles? Write down your observations/responses.

Gather oral histories of older residents in your town and compile a "Children of Old _____" booklet. Include information about school, home life, pastimes, holiday celebrations, community traditions, and so on.

Do the same for your own generation: create a "Children of the Eighties" and put the copy in a time capsule. Take photos of common activities to illustrate the booklet.

CONNECTIONS:

Read more about Indian customs, the Gold Rush, the Santa Fe Trail, the Oregon Trail (and westward expansion in general), early photography/photographers. Look in the 978 and 979 sections at the library. A few possible sources are:

Behrens, June. Powwow. Childrens Press, 1983.

Bloch, Louis M., Jr. Overland to California: A Guide for Wagon Train Travelers. Cleveland: Bloch and Company, 1984.

Burt, Olive W. Negroes in the Early West. Julian Messner, 1969.

----------. Young Wayfarers of the Early West. Hawthorn Books, 1968.

Dorian, Edith and W. N. Wilson. Trails West and Men Who Made Them. McGraw-Hill, 1955.

Honig, Donald. In the Days of the Cowboy. Random House, 1970.

Lasky, Kathryn. Beyond the Divide. Macmillan, 1983 (historical fiction).

Laycock, George and Ellen Laycock. How the Settlers Lived. David McKay, 1980.

Seidman, Laurence I. The Fools of '49: The California Gold Rush, 1848-1856. Knopf, 1976.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls. Any of the titles, including On the Way Home and West from Home.

Carole Lovett Koontz
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Doll Hospital by Joshua Horwitz. Pantheon Books, 1983. 56 pp., $10.95. Grade 3+.

SUMMARY:

Where does a doll go when it needs a doctor? To the doll hospital, of course! This particular doll hospital overlooks Lexington Avenue in New York. Irving Chais, master doll doctor, owns and operates the doll hospital. Inside are all kinds of dolls in various stages of repair and disrepair. There are also many antique dolls and dolls from all over the world. Some of the shop's shelves are filled with spare parts--doll heads, torsos, wigs, arms and legs, and eyes. Most people who come to the hospital are adults with collector dolls that need repair. But children also come with beloved dolls who need to be "cured." Dolls frequently come into the hospital literally in pieces. They all leave with a new lease on life. Many very old and valuable dolls would not survive if there weren't doctors like Mr. Chais. He has never lost a patient.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Do you think it is important to preserve old dolls? Why?

What do you think of a grown man who spends his life repairing and collecting dolls?

Bring from home dolls you played with when you were a child or which your parents played with. Make a display. Try to find out as much as you can about these dolls. Are any of them like the old dolls mentioned in the book?

Find out if there is anyone in your town who collects dolls. Plan to visit that person either as a class or by yourself.

Make a "rogues' gallery" using photos of the different old dolls you have studied. See how many you and your friends can identify. Make up a story about one doll. Tell where it might have lived, who might have been its "mommy" or "daddy," and describe one event in its life.

Choose one period of American history, e.g., colonial, and find out what kinds of dolls existed. Compare those dolls to the ones available today. Write a report on what you find out.

CONNECTIONS:

Use with Dollmaker by Kathryn Lasky.

CRITICAL OPINION:

Expert black-and-white photographs, step-by-step follow-through on different kinds of repair tasks, and interesting descriptive text make this an extremely fascinating book. It is very well done.

Patricia I. Mahieu, Ph. D.

Dollmaker by Kathryn Lasky. Scribner's, 1981. 64 pp., $11.95. Grade 4+.

SUMMARY:

Carole Bowling had been a painter and sculptor when she took a job tending the switchboard for a doll collector. As Carole looked at the dolls, she became impressed with their individuality and their personalities and began sketching them. It wasn't long before Carole began making her own dolls, starting with rag dolls.

This book shows step by step how she makes them as well as the sculpted-head portrait doll. Using her son as a model, Carole shows all the steps, from the photographing of her son to the final wigging and costuming of the doll. When she is finished, the doll looks remarkably like her son.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Using reference and other books, find out about other ways to make dolls.

Try to make a doll of your own. You might start with a simple rag doll or a corn-husk doll.

Experiment with different kinds of materials to make different expressions for doll faces. You might want to sketch them on paper first.

Find out as much as you can about the history of dollmaking and about the history of dolls both as toys and as collectors' items. Share what you find out with your classmates or friends.

CONNECTIONS:

Use this book with Doll Hospital by Joshua Horwitz.

CRITICAL OPINION:

This is a fascinating account of how one woman became interested in dollmaking and how she makes the dolls for which she became famous. The text, accompanied by well-focused and composed photographs, and interspersed by quotes from Carole Bowling, is clear and interesting. The reader anguishes with the dollmaker as she removes the mold and hopes there are no air bubbles or cracks. Highly recommended book.

Patricia I. Mahieu, Ph. D.

Emergency Room by Bob and Diane Wolfe. Carolrhoda Books, 1983. 40 pp., $7.95. Grade 4+.

SUMMARY:

Readers learn what happens from the moment of arriving at the emergency room of a hospital to the saying of goodbye after treatment. Various injuries and their treatments are described. Scott comes in with a broken arm, Joel with a cracked finger, and Mikey with a cut close to his eye, that requires stitches. Gretchen is treated for a burn and a man suspected of a heart attack is cared for. The work of paramedics is also described.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Share with the class an experience you or a member of your family has had at an emergency room. How similar is it to the description in the book?

Invite medical personnel to your class to describe their work in an emergency room.

Take a trip to the emergency room of a local hospital and find out what it's like.

Would you like to staff an emergency room? Why or why not?

CONNECTIONS:

Eric Needs Stitches by Barbara Marino, 1979.

Disease Detectives by Melvin Berger, 1978.

CRITICAL OPINION:

Accurate description supported by black-and-white photographs can be most helpful for allaying fear of the unknown in the event a child needs to go to an emergency room. Suggestions for how to act are also included, e.g., hold still so the x-ray will be clear. The book does a good, solid job of helping children understand the workings of an emergency room and the treatment for certain injuries.

Patricia I. Mahieu, Ph. D.

In the Driver's Seat by Ron and Nancy Goor. Crowell, 1982. 96 pp., $10.53.
Grade 3+.

SUMMARY:

Using photographs and text, the book shows what it would be like to be the driver of a front-end loader, a combine, a blimp, a tank, a race car, the Concorde jet, an eighteen-wheeler, a crane, and a train. Other photos at the end show views from the driver's seat of a fireboat, a forklift, a monorail, a helicopter, and a San Francisco cable car. The authors tell what buttons and levers the drivers use in each machine described and what each operator does with his machine.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Go to see some of the machines mentioned in the book. Sit in them and see how they run.

Explore some machines not mentioned in the book and make your own booklet describing what it's like to operate those machines. Share your booklet with your friends.

Interview men and women who run machines like those in the book. Find out what kind of training they needed, what the best part of their job is, and what the worst part is.

CONNECTIONS:

Heavy Equipment by Jan Adkins

Moving Heavy Things by Jan Adkins

This Is the Way It Works: A Collection of Machines by Robert Gardner

CRITICAL OPINION:

This is a fascinating book accompanied by excellent black-and-white photographs and satisfies at least the initial curiosity most adults and kids have about what it would be like to sit in the driver's seat of machines most people don't get a chance to see up close. This well-done book will appeal to most kids.

Patricia I. Mahieu, Ph. D.

Mammoth Vehicles of the World: Land , Air and Sea by John H. Bradner. Aztex, 1982. $15.95.

SUMMARY:

The biggest of the big and the hugest of the huge are the subject of this book. Over three hundred photographs and detailed text describe the biggest machinery used in mining, construction, oil, and transportation. Trucks with tires that weigh four tons each, coal-loaders with shovel and dippers the size of the room in a house, and ships longer than a city block are only some of the behemoths presented. Giants that move on land, sea, and air are shown. Mention is made of the greatest vehicles yet to come--space colonies.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Find the closest location where one of these giant machines is operating and plan a visit. Try to get inside of it and see how it works. Have students share in photos and captions what they learn.

Write a letter to Dr. Gerard K. O'Neill of Princeton University and ask him about orbiting space colonies. Read the section on space colonies first to decide what questions to ask. Perhaps he could come to speak to your class or you could interview him on a speaker phone, with the whole class asking him questions.

Have students build a model of one of the huge machines shown in the book. Be sure to show the scale so the size is clearly emphasized.

CONNECTIONS:

In the Driver's Seat by Ron and Nancy Goor

Heavy Equipment by Jan Adkins

Moving Heavy Things by Jan Adkins

This Is the Way It Works: A Collection of Machines by Robert Gardner

CRITICAL OPINION:

This is an utterly fascinating book. Photographs emphasize size and the text is technical enough to impress with specifics without being overwhelming.

Patricia I. Mahieu, Ph. D.

Medieval Holidays and Festivals: A Calendar of Celebrations by Madeleine Pelner Cosman. Scribner's, 1981. 128 pp., $12.95. Grade 6+.

SUMMARY:

Madeleine Cosman explains in detail a dozen medieval celebrations, presented month by month, in this book. Explanations of customs, procedures, and any modern equivalents make for interesting reading. The details about the celebrations--from Twelfth Night in January to Christmas--provide a unique view of life in the Middle Ages. The author explains, for example, how the term "upper crust" originated, what the various parts of a medieval banquet are, what humble pie is, what alms are, what cuckoo-foot ale is, what significance bobbing for apples has, and so on. The book includes directions for creating "transformations and illusions" through decoration and costume, as well as recipes for authentic medieval dishes.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Depending on the age group, students could recreate either one aspect of a festival or holiday or do many or all of the activities listed in the book.

Creating individual dishes or complete meals would be an option for older students.

Presenting a medieval celebration, complete with costumes, activities, and a banquet would integrate many content areas (art, dramatics, music, home economics, history, and industrial arts) and could provide students with a valuable learning experience.

CONNECTIONS:

A bibliography at the end of the book suggests further readings.

This book would enhance the study of any literature from the Middle Ages.

See also the review of The Knight of the Golden Plain by Mollie Hunter.

Fabulous Feasts: Medieval Cookery and Ceremony by Madeleine Cosman.

CRITICAL OPINION:

This book offers many ideas and information that would be especially appealing to gifted children and/or upper-level children.

Carole Lovett Koontz

Play It Safe: The Kids' Guide to Personal Safety and Crime Prevention by Kathy S. Kyte. Knopf, 1983. 128 pp., $8.99. Grade 3+.

SUMMARY:

This book gives clear, straightforward guidelines for kids to protect themselves and their possessions from robbery, assault, and other crimes. Kids learn to develop confidence in dealing with situations where they or their families may be potential crime victims. The book gives kids specific and practical advice. An attitude of "just because you are a kid does not mean you are powerless" pervades the book. Kids can take control of their lives and also be responsible for brothers, sisters, friends, and even their parents when the situation warrants it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Select situations from the book--coming home to an empty house, walking home alone from school, physical abuse--and role-play procedures to be followed.

Practice different procedures suggested in the book--the power yell, walking with a confident air, developing physical balance--until you feel comfortable with them and they become automatic responses.

Prepare for younger children in your school a series of booklets that deal with such topics as walking home from school, how to answer the phone when you are home alone, how to answer the door when you are home alone, and so on.

Talk with your principal and teacher. Try to get a school-wide safety awareness program going. Make posters, put on a series of mini-skits for the whole school. Invite your parents for these sessions.

CONNECTIONS:

Home Alone by Eleanor Schick (ages 4-7)

Don't Hurt Laurie! by Willo Davis Roberts (ages 12 and up)

Did You Hear What Happened to Andrea? by Gloria D. Miklowitz (ages 12 up)

CRITICAL OPINION:

This book has a simple text that is easily and interestingly presented. It contains excellent suggestions for kids in helping them safeguard themselves.

Patricia I. Mahieu, Ph. D.

Seeds Pop, Stick, and Glide by Patricia I. Lauber. Crown, 1981. 64 pp., $10.95.
Grade 3+.

SUMMARY:

Even though plants have roots and are for the most part stationary, their seeds are quite the world travelers. The flowers of plants make seeds and then use various methods to "kick them out of the nest" to begin their own plants. Some seeds stick to animals and clothing and thus "hitchhike" to a new location. Other seeds grow parachute-like structures and wing their way into the world on the wind. Other seeds rely on water to carry them to new vistas. And still others have pods with built-in "springs" which catapult them into new adventures.

Of the millions of seeds dispersed, a few find suitable places to stay and put down roots. The cycle then begins again. The new plant grows, roots, stems, leaves, and flowers which make the seeds. At the proper time the seeds are launched to populate new ground. Included are such plants as Queen Ann's lace, flowering dogwood, pin oak, poppy, dandelion, goldenrod, milkweed, Russian thistle (tumbleweed), violet, witch hazel, touch-me-not (jewelweed), waterlily, and coconut.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Why do you suppose different plants use different ways of dispersing seeds? (e. g., Why do coconuts use water rather than wind to disperse their seeds?) Discuss this for various plants.

Describe how several plants, e. g., Russian thistle, violet,and dandelion, are particularly suited to their type of seed dispersal.

Carefully observe three or four plants in their natural habitat from spring through fall. Keep a record of how the flowers make and disperse their seeds. Make a chart categorizing their method of seed dispersal. Compare these plants to the ones described in this book. A hand lens will be helpful with this activity.

Go through a seed catalog and predict how various plants disperse their seeds. Check your predictions in plant reference books.

Make a mural about the travels of a seed. Make a mosaic out of seeds.

CONNECTIONS:

Use with various types of reference books, e. g., encyclopedias, plant field guides, textbooks, and charts to acquaint students with a variety of sources.

CRITICAL OPINION:

Crisp, magnified black-and-white photography, accurate scientific detail, and lyrical language make this a fascinating and pleasurable way to learn about how plants disperse their seeds.

Patricia I. Mahieu, Ph. D.

Self-Portrait: Margot Zemach by Margot Zemach. Addison-Wesley, 1978. 31 pp., $12.95.

SUMMARY:

In both words and illustrations, Margot Zemach, the Caldecott artist, tells the story of her growing to be an artist. During her childhood, she drew to amuse herself while her parents, who were actors, were away. While she was studying art in Europe, she met Harve Zemach. While he wrote stories, she illustrated them. Eventually, four daughters helped with the illustrations by acting as models. After Harve's death, the family returned to the United States, where Margot is still illustrating books. The illustrations in this book show both characters from Margot's works and what was happening in her life as she was doing those illustrations.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

This is one of a series about illustrators of children's books. The other artists featured in the series are Erik Blegvad, Trina Schart Hyman, and Garth Williams. The whole series would be excellent for team-teaching with an art teacher.

CONNECTIONS:

This book can be related to any of Margot Zemach's illustrations but especially to Duffy and the Devil, the Caldecott Medal book. The way Margot Zemach works could be compared with Steven Kellog's method shown in the Weston Woods' kit How a Picture Book Is Made or with Arnold Lobel's kit.

CRITICAL OPINION:

The series is an excellent attempt at showing creative people at work. However, each book of the series is at a different reading level. Margot Zemach is at the intermediate level and is one of the few autobiographies for children of this ability. The illustrations are so detailed that this book needs to be looked at individually. The series would be excellent for background for a young authors' conference, for students' own perusal, and teacher's knowledge of children's literature.

Becky Reid

Sugaring Time by Kathryn Lasky. Macmillan, 1983. 64 pp., $10.95. Grades 4-7.

SUMMARY:

Sugaring time arrives when freezing nights and warm days of March start the sap flowing in the maple trees. The Lacey family of Vermont share their story of gathering the sap and boiling it into maple syrup.

All ages can enjoy this book, which is rich in descriptive phrases:

> With a sound like muffled thunder, their hoofs crush the snow. This snow of early spring is called corn snow because the crystals are big and granular, like kernels of corn. But it is really more sugary in its texture, and when Jonathan skis, it sounds as if he is skimming across the thick frosting of a wedding cake.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

An experience chart or a group story would be a good follow-up to this book. the children could share the sequence of events for making maple syrup.

CONNECTIONS:

In the Flaky Frosty Morning by Kuskin

A Walk on a Snowy Night by Delton

Snowy Day by Keats

The Weaver's Gift by Kathryn Lasky is also good.

CRITICAL OPINION:

This is an excellent read-aloud. The photographs help tell the story.

Karen Bagent

The Tipi: A Center of Native American Life by David and Charlotte Yue. Knopf, 1984. 96 pp. Grade 4+.

SUMMARY:

Simple charcoal drawings and clear text describe the life and culture of the Great Plains Indians, their techniques for building tipis, and the land on which they lived. Tribal customs for making, erecting, furnishing, and living in tipis is presented. Differences between tribes is also shown. Tipis used for different purposes are described and the spiritual significance of tipis is explained.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Assume the role of a woman in a Great Plains Indian tribe. Write a diary that describes how you make, build, and furnish a tipi. Include what your role is in the family and what customs you follow in the Indian family.

Build a miniature tipi using the directions in the book.

Discuss the way the Great Plains Indians lived when buffalo were numerous and the way they lived after the buffalo became extinct.

Try to find someone of Indian ancestry in your community. Invite him/her to discuss the change in the Indian way of life after the United States government forced Indians onto reservations. Include discussion of the pull between large groups and the rights of small groups.

CONNECTIONS:

Killer-of-Death by Betty Baker (ages 5-8)

The Friendly Wolf by Paul and Dorothy Goble (ages 8-11)

Yellow Fur and Little Hawk by Wilma Pitchford Hays (ages 8-11)

Moon of the Big-Dog by Jay Leech and Zane Spencer (ages 8-11)

Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West by Dee Brown (ages 11-14)

How the Plains Indians Lived by George S. Fichter (ages 11-14)

CRITICAL OPINION:

Many details of building tipis, spiritual significance of designs and furnishings, and the customs of everyday tipi living are very simply and nicely executed. A good book.

Patricia I. Mahieu, Ph. D.

Upon the Head of the Goat -- A Childhood in Hungary, 1939-1944 by Aranka Siegal. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1981. 214 pp. $9.95. Signet Vista, 1983. 192 pp., $2.25.

SUMMARY:

This is the true story of Aranka Siegal's childhood before and during the German occupation of Hungary. The story chronicles Aranka's childhood days as a young city girl who enjoys visiting her eccentric Jewish grandmother (who lives in the countryside) through the "rounding up" of Jewish citizens to the ghetto and deportation to Auschwitz.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

The Jewish people believe that the importance of a study of the Holocaust is to prevent it from happening again. If this is true, why do you suppose Aranka Siegal chose to write about the period prior to her actual days spent in Auschwitz?

When I compare my problems with Piri's, I feel guilty that I should even call my problems "problems." How does this book make you feel about your problems? Can we realistically compare our problems?

Mrs. Davidowitz believed that "good" living would show the Germans that the Jewish people were not swine. If she could have created a following in her beliefs, do you think it would have made a difference in the fate of the Jewish people? Knowing that she did perish, do you think it was worth her efforts to keep up appearances? Or should she have just resigned herself to her fate like so many of the others?

CONNECTIONS:

Gentlehands by M.E. Kerr (fiction)

The Endless Steppe by Esther Hautzig (historical fiction)

Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes

The Diary of Anne Frank play version; also the videotape of the movie starring Melissa Gilbert

The Road From Home by David Kherdian

CRITICAL OPINION:

This book is excellent for good readers in seventh grade and up in large or small groups. The book does not have enough character interaction and plot action to hold the attention of a heterogeneous class. The characterization is excellent and the emotions created are powerful. I was left with feelings of great loss and of great shame.

Peggy Papritan

# POETRY

A Children's Almanac of Words at Play by Willard R. Espy. Clarkson N. Potter, 1982. 243 pp., $15.95. Crown, $8.95. Grades 3-9.

SUMMARY:

Patterned after his Almanac of Words at Play, this edition contains a year's worth of language delights for children eight to fifteen years old. The daily entries range from anagrams to bloopers to palindromes to Tom Swifties and cover the gamut of the playful aspects of language. The materials in this volume would make language arts classes livelier and could be used either in conjunction with regular lessons or as fillers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Students could write their own "stinky Pinkies," limericks, riddles, puns, epitaphs, spoonerisms, malapropisms, nonsense verse, and so on after having studied the forms from the Almanac.

Students might want to collaborate on projects that would involve creating and/or collecting certain forms from the Almanac or even present appropriate examples orally to the class.

CONNECTIONS:

Have students explore the work of Lewis Carroll, Richard Armour, Ogden Nash, and others who play with language in their writing.

CRITICAL OPINION:

Espy's Almanac is a source of delight not only for children, but also for their teachers. The ultimate challenge for teachers is to contain themselves when they present some of the hilarious entries. This is a book any language arts teacher (upper elementary through high school) should own.

Carole Lovett Koontz

One at a Time by David McCord. Little, Brown, 1977. 494 pp., $12.95.
Grade 4+.

SUMMARY:

One at a Time contains two hundred poems (enough for at least one a day during the school year!) on a variety of subjects from holidays to nature. Some poems are whimsical; others are more serious. Included are examples of haiku, cinquains, clerihews, and ballades. Especially useful is the subject index.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

The variety of topics McCord covers in his poems enables teachers (especially in grades K-6) to enrich virtually any subject with a poem. Many poems can be a springboard for sharing, experimenting, writing assignments, and observing nature. For example, after reading "October Wind," students can study what makes leaves turn color and drop in the autumn. After reading "What Are Pockets For?" students could write responses or could write their own "What Are _____For?" poems.

"Starling, "Flicker," "Owls Talking," "Crows," and "Birds in the Rain" would enhance a unit on birds. "The Frost Pane" could be incorporated in a lesson on how frost forms.

Some poems on the inconsistencies in the English language would appeal more to older students (junior high): "Spelling Bee," "Like You As It," "O-U-G-H," and "Singular Indeed."

CONNECTIONS:

There are endless possibilities for creating/finding visuals that deal with the subjects of the poems.

Older students who have studied music might want to use the poems as lyrics and write music to create songs.

Find other general poetry collections (e.g., The Random House Book of Poetry for Children) and compare/contrast poems that deal with a common subject/theme.

NOTES:

In 1977, McCord was presented the National Council of Teachers of English Award for Poetry for Children. One at a Time offers the most comprehensive collection of the work of this distinguished poet.

Carole Lovett Koontz

Rainbows Are Made. Poems by Carl Sandburg, selected by Lee Bennett Hopkins. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984. $12.95; paper, $6.95. K+.

SUMMARY:

During his lifetime. Carl Sandburg wrote over eight hundred poems. Rainbows Are Made contains seventy verses selected from The Complete Poems of Carl Sandburg, Revised and Expanded Edition (1970). This new collection is divided into six sections dealing with sensitive views of people, word play at its best, observations of common, everyday things, nature notes, and his views of the sea and of night. Each section is introduced by one of the "Tentative (First Model) Definitions of Poetry," culled from the thirty-eight that prefaced his volume Good Morning, America.

There are selections from The People, Yes--favorites such as "Southern Pacific," "Illinois Farmer," "Buffalo Dusk," bits of humor ("Arithmetic") and even a piece on Ohio, from "Crossing Ohio When Poppies Bloom in Ashtabula."

His poems are ageless, filled with surprise. There is wonder in every line. He can be funny, serene, serious, or sad.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Have students relate how each of the sections ties in with the "tentative definition" at the beginning of each section. What sorts of places and events inspired Sandburg's poetry?

Sandburg put many of his poems to music. Encourage students to try putting the poems to music.

Do you think that The People, Yes inspired Americans during the Great Depression?

CONNECTIONS:

This book could be used in conjunction with Sandburg's other collections. You could also touch on his ambitious study of Abraham Lincoln.

This book could tie in with a comparison/contrast study of other American poets, such as Robert Frost.

CRITICAL OPINION:

This is an excellent collection of poems, definitely a read-aloud.

Phyllis Fischer

The Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Jack Prelutsky, ed. Random House, 1983. 248 pp., $13.95. Grades 1-5.

SUMMARY:

This collection of 572 poems is illustrated by Arnold Lobel. The poems are geared for elementary -age children and arranged according to themes: "Nature Is. . .," "The Four Seasons," "Dogs and Cats and Bears and Bats," "The Ways of Living Things," "City, Oh, City!" "Children, Children Everywhere," "Me I Am!" "Home! You're Where It's Warm Inside," "I'm Hungry!" "Some People I Know," "Nonsense! Nonsense!" "Alphabet Stew," "Where Goblins Dwell," and "The Land of Potpourri."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Enrich the study of any story on the above themes by reading one of the poems from the collection.

Have students write poems to make a display entitled "Some People I Know." Read some of the poems in the section first to give students ideas. Have students illustrate the poems or bring in photos of the people they are describing in the poems.

The nonsense poems in the collection are especially appealing. Relate those to other nonsense poems from collections by some of the poets represented.

Have a "Nonsense Day" in which students wear clothes backwards, turn desks around, and reverse or confuse any aspect of the classroom routine. Have each student choose a nonsense poem (or one he has written) to recite at a "poetry reading" for the class.

CRITICAL OPINION:

This collection is a must for each school library and the perfect book for the teacher's personal or classroom library. With more and more teachers using a thematic approach with their teaching, this collection's thematic division makes it a valuable resource.

Karen Bagent

Roald Dahl's Revolting Rhymes by Roald Dahl. Knopf, 1982. 48 pp., $9.95.

SUMMARY:

The premise of this poetry book is that the folk tales that you have heard all these years "were cooked up years and years ago and made to sound all soft and sappy." Roald Dahl has retold some "sappy stories" with surprise endings instead of the usual "and they lived happily ever after." The tales satirized are "Cinderella," "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," "Jack and the Beanstalk," "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," "Little Red Riding Hood," and "The Three Little Pigs."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

With intermediate-grade students, the obvious extension activity is to have them rewrite other familiar folk tales. If the students have written poetry, they may wish to do it in verse. Primary students could be asked to compare the familiar version with Dahl's by asking such questions as "Which one did you like best?" or "Which could have happened?"

CONNECTIONS:

Other books that need to be on hand could be Paul Goldone's folk tales as the original source for reference in retelling. If the students are going to rewrite in verse, a rhyming dictionary could be introduced at this time.

CRITICAL OPINION:

This is an excellent read-aloud book for introducing satire or narrative poetry. This book could be used at the conclusion of a unit on folk tales or just for fun. The only problem is Dahl's use of British terms such as loo and bloke. However, checking the meanings could reveal some interesting etymologies and would give students practice in using the dictionary. (For example, loo derives from the French lieux, short for les lieux d'aisances, toilets, or literally, "places of convenience.")

Becky Reid

# PICTURE BOOKS

A Book of Hugs by Dave Ross. Crowell, 1980. $7.00. Grades 1-6.

SUMMARY:

David Ross has in words and illustration elaborated on the meaning of a hug. He has classified hugs into categories of animals, people, things, and special. In all, he has given examples of thirty-three different hugs. About "Mommy hugs," for example, Ross says, "You can never hug a Mommy too much." Included at the end of the book are facts and hints about hugs.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Is this everything you need to know about hugs?

Can there be possibly any hugs left out? A creative class or child may decide there are more hugs to be defined.

Using Ross's format, older students could define handshakes.

Younger students could alphabetize hugs, demonstrate hugs, or even enjoy a hug.

How about a "hug day"?

CONNECTIONS:

This is a unique book. Ross has produced a sequel, though, that you'll want to share. too: More Hugs! Harper and Row, 1984. 32 pp., $6.89.
These books can be related to a unit on mental health or self-esteem.

Dave Ross has also written A Book of Kisses.

CRITICAL OPINION:

This is an excellent book for large-group read-aloud. The illustrations are large enough to be seen by all. This is a book to make everyone feel good.

Becky Reid

Grandma's Wheelchair by Lorraine Henriod. Whitman, 1982. 32 pp., $9.75.
Pre-school-grade 1.

SUMMARY:

The story centers around four-year-old Thomas and his daily visits to his grandma. Thomas visits his grandma each day after his older brother Nate leaves for kindergarten. Grandma is in a wheelchair.

While Thomas is with his grandma, he is able to feel as important as his brother Nate. (Nate thinks he's smart because he's in kindergarten.) Thomas also gets attention his mother is unable to give since she is expecting and "doesn't have much lap anymore."

Each day Thomas does little chores for his grandma, sometimes riding with her in her wheelchair. He also spends lots of time just sitting on Grandma's lap and listening to stories. When lunchtime comes and Nate is back from kindergarten and eager to share his school experiences, Thomas, too, has things to share.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

What does it mean to be handicapped?

Do you know anyone who has a handicap? Tell about it.

Tell about some ways that you could help someone with a handicap or someone who cannot do certain things because they are old.

CONNECTIONS:

This book would be excellent to use to introduce a unit on handicaps.

An excellent book that tells about a variety of handicaps is available from Current--Different and Alike by Nancy P. McConnell. Also available by the same author is one on older people, Young and Old Alike and The Special Trade.

CRITICAL OPINION:

This is an excellent book. It would make a good read-aloud. The illustrations are also very good.

Linda Weiss

Hiroshima No Pika by Toshi Maruki. Lothrop, Lee, and Shepard, 1980. 44 pp., $12.00. Grade 5+.

SUMMARY:

This forty-four-page picture book tells the story of Mii and her family beginning with their breakfast on the morning of August 6, 1945, in Hiroshima. The story describes their terror and attempts to survive for the four days following "the flash." Mii's father is seriously hurt and her mother carries him to the river. They stumble over piles of dead and dying people and finally are sheltered in a hospital where there are no doctors or medicine. Mii's father survives his immediate wounds only to die later of radiation sickness. Many years later, Mii is still the same size as she was when, as a seven-year-old, she witnessed the devastation of the atomic bomb.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Create a lantern that could hold a candle and could float on the river, as Mii did to remember the dead at Hiroshima.

Write a poem about your feelings after you read/hear this story.

Write a letter to someone who might influence the decision to drop such a bomb as was dropped at Hiroshima on August 6, 1945.

Read President Truman's response to criticism about the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in a history book, biography, or encyclopedia.

CONNECTIONS:

This book could be related to World War II social studies units, units on war and peace, biographies of Harry Truman, and Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes by E. Coerr.

CRITICAL OPINION:

This is an excellent picture book for older readers. The text is simple and to the point of the story, but touching in its simplicity. I would share this with a whole class, but it's important to note that people's clothes were burned off in the flash so there is nudity in the pictures. This book does not deliver an anti-U. S. plea for dropping the bomb but rather a plea against it happening again.

NOTES:

Recommended for use with grades 5 and older. A touching read-aloud for large or small groups, and also appropriate for use by individual students.

Judith Keck

I Read Signs by Tana Hoban. Greenwillow Books, 1983. 32 pp., $10.00. Pre-school-grade 1.

SUMMARY:

Through the medium of photography, Tana Hoban focuses her young readers' attention specifically on common signs they see around them. Her book of thirty color close-up photographs begins with "Come in/We're OPEN" and ends with "Sorry/ We're CLOSED." In between, Hoban not only displays pertinent signs, such as "PLAYGROUND" and "SCHOOL," but she also teaches various important concepts, such as the safety rules of "STOP" and "DANGER/Keep Out" and the opposites of "WALK" and "DON'T WALK" and "PUSH" and "PULL." More importantly, however, Hoban helps teach beginning readers (or older non-readers) to sight-read useful, familiar words through two popular forms: photography and signs.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Children can tour the neighborhood to observe, and in some cases, obey the signs they have read in the book.

Children can draw or make three-dimensional models of their favorite signs.

Students can photograph or draw signs not in Hoban's book.

Many signs create specific feelings which children can express through vocal interpretation and/or rhythm instruments. For example, one strong drum beat can be "STOP"; a ring of triangles and bells can be "PLAYGROUND."

Set up an open-ended scenario in which a particular sign (such as "Beware of Dog/ Keep Out") is not, or cannot be read. Students can act out the characters, improvising what happens to them. Very young children need the scene well defined for them, perhaps by a narrator, while they pantomime the actions.

CONNECTIONS:

This book is an excellent accompaniment to units on safety instruction and neighborhoods.

Hoban has published two companion books, I Read Symbols, which introduces international signs seen along highways, and I Walk and Read, which introduces signs such as "MUSEUM ENTRANCE" and "R[illegible]AURANT," seen along city streets.

CRITICAL OPINION:

Hoban, whose photographs have appeared in popular magazines and in the Museum of Modern Art, has won numerous literary awards, including the Children's Book Showcase Title in both 1972 and 1973. Her approach to children's literature is original, contemporary, and non-degrading. Further, her presentation develops an aesthetic appreciation of photography in readers, since she embraces her medium and subject matter artistically. Because of her unusual techniques, Hoban's sign books are suitable for high school remedial reading rooms as well as for kindergarten and elementary classrooms.

Kathleen B. Wallace

Louis the Fish by Arthur Yorinks. Illustrated by Richard Egielski. Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1980. 32 pp., $10.95. Pre-school and older.

SUMMARY:

This book chronicles the transformation of Louis, a young man forced against his will to be a butcher, from a miserable young man into a happy fish.

Louis was pushed into the family meat-cutting business by domineering parents. Out of a sense of duty and guilt, Louis maintained the business when his parents died suddenly. But Louis's true love was fish. Fish made him happy. So when the world imposed upon him became too much to bear, Louis woke up one morning and found he was a fish: "Silvery scales. Big lips. A tail. A salmon." And he lived happily after that.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Have students compile a scrapbook entitled "Just Me" or "The Person I Am" or "Who Am I?" to celebrate the uniqueness of each student. Include baby photos and other favorite photos (candids are usually more interesting than school pictures), student writing focusing on self: "What Makes Me Different from Everyone Else," "Why My Best Friend Likes Me," "I'm My Parents' Kid," "My Favorite _____" (Pastime, Foods, Relative, Season, Holiday, Book, TV Show, Song, etc.), "What I Want to Be," and so on. Encourage students to illustrate their writing with their own artwork (even let them try a self-portrait) or with appropriate pictures.

CONNECTIONS:

In The Random House Book of Poetry for Children (ed. Prelutsky), consult the "Me I Am!" section (pp. 117-129), which contains a selection of poems dealing with self. Students could adapt the anonymous poem "My Father Owns the Butcher Shop" (p. 118) to reflect the story line in Louis the Fish.

CRITICAL OPINION:

As a picture-story book, Louis the Fish appeals to all ages. The engaging artwork and the pervasive, subtle sense of humor make it a book worth sharing. This is an excellent read-aloud selection.

Carole Lovett Koontz

Over, Under & Through and Other Spatial Concepts by Tana Hoban. Macmillan, 1973. 28 pp., $10.95. Pre-school-grade 2.

SUMMARY:

Tana Hoban makes learning even grammar fun when she uses twenty-eight sharp black-and-white photographs to illustrate twelve spatial concepts while reinforcing twelve corresponding prepositions. With one photograph per page, Hoban presents things that we might see everyday, such as two girls leaning against a tree or a polar bear sitting behind bars. Often one photograph contains several concepts/prepositions. The concepts/prepositions are presented in five groups of two or three with the prepositions appearing on strips of bold yellow along the outside edges of five pages--the only color to break the black/white images. For elementary classroom and reading teachers, Hoban's book provides imaginative and provocative supplemental material.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Magazine ads often illustrate spatial concepts with corresponding implied prepositions. Students can create their own concepts books by locating one magazine ad for each concept/preposition in Hoban's book as well as for additional concepts/prepositions.

Students who have access to cameras can make their own photographic books of concepts perhaps centered around a theme such as animals or their school.

Students, individually or as a group, can write a scenario about what is happening in one of Hoban's photographs. Then as a group they can improvise the scenario. Young children can pantomime a scenario with the teacher as narrator of the action.

Students in groups of twos and threes can explore the meaning of prepositions physically by finding ways to illustrate various prepositions with their bodies. For example, two children make a tunnel while a third goes through. Exciting or unusual music, such as In Sounds from Way Out, helps stimulate movement creativity.

CONNECTIONS:

Hoban has written numerous books that not only explore concepts but also illustrate corresponding language. Examples include Push Pull, Empty Full; Dig, Drill, Dump, Fill; and More Than One.

CRITICAL OPINION:

Through photography, Hoban has made the often-uninteresting grammar lesson of prepositions exciting, even stimulating. Resourceful teachers can use various Hoban books to spur their own creativity to present core curriculum material in enjoyable, artistic ways.

Kathleen B. Wallace

Hilary Knight's The Twelve Days of Christmas. Illustrated by Hilary Knight. Macmillan, 1981. 34 pp., $9.95. Pre-school up.

SUMMARY:

Benjamin brings Bedelia, his true love, the traditional gifts of and for the twelve days of Christmas. What is Bedelia going to do with all those birds, pear trees (and pears), etc.? Very careful reading of the wonderful and detailed illustrations is necessary for predicting the answer. Also, there is the problem that Reginald the raccoon must solve. These pictures must be read time and time again for all the details of the story to be realized.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Math: counting, addition, multiplication (as an estimation or prediction task, have older children determine how many of each item Bedelia will receive).

Music: singing the song

Drama: acting out the song; writing a script for a play; pantomiming Bedelia's reactions and responses

Creative writing: Reginald's story, Rose's story, Bedelia's story, different points of view, different conclusions, etc.

CONNECTIONS:

This book could be compared to other illustrations of the same song, illustrations of different songs, or could be a model for illustrating other songs or stories.

CRITICAL OPINION:

This is a marvelous seasonal book that can be used K-8, at least as a fun "reading" project. The pictures are so detailed that they must be "read" time and time again. (The children in my house read it all year long and make new discoveries with each reading.) As a read-aloud at any level, it is delightful and the children will clamor to be the first to look at it. (I suggest the taping of the edges of the last page if you should purchase this book.)

Beth Suskind

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